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Ferris to oversee Michigan's Freedom to Learn program (CORRECTED COPY)

BIG RAPIDS – Ferris State University has assumed responsibility for Michigan's Freedom to Learn (FTL) program and will work with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to administer \$3.7 million in state funds and \$2.7 million in federal funds related to the program.

Transfer of this program places Ferris in a leadership position critical to the continued transformation of education in Michigan, according to University President David L. Eisler. "The Freedom to Learn model is key to enhancing the ability of our Michigan students to compete for the future economic development of Michigan and the nation," said Dr. Eisler.

The statewide education program aims to improve student achievement in core academic subjects by providing students with access to 21st Century learning tools. FTL focuses on creating a one-to-one environment in which students learn with computers, not simply about them. The program is also designed to bridge the digital divide, expanding technology opportunities to middle school students, especially students in rural and high-priority schools.

The goals for Freedom to Learn are ambitious yet attainable:

- Foster effective and efficient learning environments.
- Empower teachers to share ideas beyond the walls of their classrooms.
- Provide parents with the tools to increase their engagement with student learning.
- Encourage universal access to technology.
- Provide Michigan students with the skills to lead in the 21st Century workforce.

"Transition of the FTL program to Ferris State University is recognition of Ferris as a state leader in professional education development and helps build stronger working relationships with public schools," said Michael Harris, Ferris vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Harris, who will coordinate the program in cooperation with MDE, noted that the efforts of Scott Hill-Kennedy, Ferris vice president for governmental relations and general counsel, were critical in the University being chosen to oversee the program.

Ferris will work closely with MDE to coordinate and provide professional development to school personnel, and administer grants for acquiring technology, developing the curricula and adopting best practices for classroom learning. Already this program serves more than 20,000 Michigan sixth-grade students who are connected to learning through educational technology, enhance curricula and teachers with advanced training.